

PEREZ BERANTES CONDEMNS COMMUNISM IN A PASTORAL LETTER

SAYS THAT NO CUBAN SHOULD SUPPORT IT

PRAISES THE REVOLUTION'S INTEREST IN THE NEEDY CLASSES

Monsignor Enrique PEREZ BERANTES, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, has sent us a copy of the following pastoral letter, with the request that we publish it:

The Archbishopric of Santiago de Cuba Pastoral Duty. Faithful to our sacred pastoral duty of caring for the welfare, sustenance, and protection of the flock entrusted to us by the Supreme Head of Christianity, Christ's Vicar, we feel obliged today to address our beloved diocesans to remind them, or (to) inform them, if necessary, of the line of conduct they should follow in the present circumstances, which are somewhat confusing and bound to provoke serious concern in many of our charges, who surely will expect guidance from us.

In doing this, we are confident of performing a service to the Church and the country, our two great loves and objects of our constant vigilance and concern.

The enemy is within. We begin by saying that the lines are now drawn between the Church and its enemies. It is no longer mere rumors or hazarded statements, more or less slanted or contrived. We can no longer say that the enemy is at the gate, for he is actually already inside, speaking loudly, as someone who is on his own territory.

It is not in vain that some, better advised and more clear-sighted, became alarmed and vary some time ago, and prepared themselves for the struggle against those who arbitrarily try to impose the heavy yoke of the new slavery, for the true Christian cannot live without freedom either. It must not be forgotten that always and everywhere, from Rome to Budapest, it has always seemed better to us to lose all, even to shed blood, than to renounce the liberty which is the attribute of the children of God.

Communism is alert. We know, furthermore, that Communism is the great enemy of Christianity today; Communism always vigilant, always alert, always ready to fall upon its prey, overriding everything to go directly for its objective; Communism, which, whether erect or crouching, is easy to find everywhere; and it is present everywhere, notwithstanding that, even among us, there are some who are needless, innocent, or extremely expedient enough to keep on denying it, or even to take it ill that everyone does not think as they.

Church doctrine. Church doctrine, which is binding upon all Catholics, is clear and final on this point; and, even though many pontifical documents have been devoted to it, it can be stated in a few words: "Communism, says Pope Pius XI in the Enciclica Divini Redemptoris, is intrinsically wicked." We shall therefore cite only some of the reasons for this plain, terse statement given in the same document.

Dialectical materialism. The first and principal reason is that Communism is based on the dialectical materialism of Marx, albeit obscured by occasionally deceptive appearances. The doctrine of materialism teaches that there is only one reality: matter and its blind forces; therefore, everything

in the world is matter in the process of evolution, and society itself is no more than a manifestation and aspect of matter.

Communism is atheistic. The second, which follows logically from the first, if matter is everything, is that there is no room for God; there is no difference between matter and mind, nor between body and soul; no survival of the soul after death, and, consequently, no hope of life after death. This premise explains why Communism proclaims itself atheistic.

It follows from the above that Communism, like materialism, is the negation of all human values, which in this system lack the spiritual foundation which elevates man and places him above the purely organic.

Under Communism, man, reduced to a completely material being, is without liberty and moral restraint against the assault of the lowest passions, which are not pacified by any purely human consideration.

We believe that the above will suffice to justify the condemnation of Communism as intrinsically wicked. We need not point out that it denies the existence and indissolubility of matrimonial bonds, the right to own property, and so many other tenets, and even tries to break down the entire social system to its very foundations, under the pretext of creating a new humanism without God and his holy law, submerged in a sea of hatreds and animosities.

What must be the attitude of Catholics? Our attitude must be loyalty to the Pope. We must therefore always follow his instructions faithfully:

Have nothing, absolutely nothing to do with Communism. In view of the repeated condemnations received from the supreme authority of Catholicism, we deem it a vital necessity to urge, and even threaten, our diocesans, who

include all Cubans, not to cooperate in any way, or have contact, with Communism; moreover, they must keep as far away from this implacable and powerful enemy of Christianity, as they can, and not let themselves be impressed by the more or less disguised or alluring, but always fallacious and cunning, statements and promises, nor by the cleverness which Communism displays in extending its hand, as it does so charmingly to Catholics, since this is actually only a well-contrived strategy for catching the unwary more easily.

We wish to reaffirm our distinction between Communism and Communists. For the latter, individually, we must not fail to do anything we can for them, in pursuance of the divine commandment of charity.

Everyone must keep two things well in mind: first, that we must make no concessions of principle; second, that the enemies of the Church, particularly Communism, know what they are after, and pursue their objectives <sup>religiously</sup> and unwaveringly.

The social doctrine of the Church. It would be well if the Catholics would at least make efforts to acquaint themselves with the social doctrine of the Church, which offers a satisfactory solution to all problems in the economic and social fields. They would find out the reasons why sincere and naturally honest Communists, when they came to know about this doctrine, have to say: "this is the real solution to the social problem."

The material aspect. Although we are not concerned with this today, at least directly, we may nevertheless be permitted to say that the Church has always called for a more just distribution of material goods. No one has spoken up more loudly for the needy than the Church, to which, alas, the possessors of wealth and the usurpers of public property should have paid

greater need. We have said many times, and we repeat today, that, in order that humans should not be in worse conditions than animals (as they actually are in many parts of the world), one must understand what resources each family has to meet the necessities of life. There should be no human beings who face a new day without a mouthful of bread for them or their children without knowing to whom to turn to remedy a state of misery which brings many to the verge of desperation. This is downright inhuman and cruel, and a shameful spectacle such as this, as well as the repugnant slums in which many families still live, frequently not far from sumptuous palaces, should make us all blush.

In this, and in other matters, the Revolutionary Government merits praise for its solicitude for such needy and neglected classes; and we congratulate it for that.

And let no one think that because God has been excluded, his daily bread will arrive with the morning sun, nor that it will be easier to get it; on the contrary, he may find himself without either God or bread.

Revival of Christian life. We love God: We need to. Worst of all is that Communism and materialism have a distinct interest in having us all sail the sea of life blindfolded, without compass and without a pilot, which is the same as condemning us to a life without hope, without faith, and without love, distrustful of everything and everyone.

Materialism and Communism are ejecting God everywhere; but it is a fact that we Catholics, at least, cannot reconcile ourselves to a life without God or his sacred law, without which any law designed by man lacks solid foundation: to legislate without God is to build on sand.

We love God completely. We love God completely, everywhere, at every moment. We love God in the home, presiding over the domestic social

group. We love God in the school, in the courts of justice, in the legislature, in business, in industry, in the field, in the hospital, and in prison. Poor prisoners, and poor sick people without God!

We love God completely, because it is His due, because He has every right to be in everything and everywhere, and because we all are in constant need of Him. We love God, finally, because without God there would be chaos.

Without God, there is no peace. We love our families, the justice and decency of life, and our country a great deal. Of all these things so dear to our hearts, God is the mainstay, as he is the beginning and the end; and further, knowing that men, even the greatest and best-intentioned, are incapable, by themselves, of warding off the fearful social collapse which threatens the world, or of pulling society out of the hole in which it has fallen and become mired.

After all, who, other than God, can possibly bring about the real unity in the thoughts and inclinations of all which is necessary to social well-being? Without the aid of God, who can possibly harmonize the so frequently conflicting human interests, especially if the floodgates of natural desires are broken? Who, if not God?

With God excluded from the life of society, where can we find the peace for which individuals and nations so ardently hunger? Where?

And yet, peace, real peace is at hand. To attain it, it is necessary and sufficient to make a half turn toward the right, for then we meet Christ, who is "our peace." Everything else is a loss of time. Who does not know that?

The best armament is the Ten Commandments. To win this peace, let us employ the power of reason, and not the reason of power. Let each man carry within himself a policeman, strongly wielding the weapon of the Commandments. And, by the same token, let no one anywhere, in the streets, taken to arms invented by man to kill people and destroy property. How horrible!

Return to God. To gain such noble ends requires mobilizing all the forces of those who would live with God, and, as God directs, throwing off the lethargy which affects many, who cease to concern themselves with what is most important and with what goes on around them, while the enemy allows himself not a moment's rest.

It is accordingly absolutely necessary that all of life, individual, social, and national, revolve around God, and that everyone practice His holy Law, which is equally binding on all. There must be a return to God, whose absence means death and vacuum which cannot be filled by anyone or anything.

#### Religious Ignorance

Practicing the Law of God and living as behooves a Christian, continually strengthening our faith, requires sound and well-founded religious instruction, the lack of which is a powerful ally of all of the enemies of the Church. For Communism, which is lying in wait and on the march, the masses of peasants and citizens who are materially and spiritually undernourished constitute the best field for its clearly atheistic activities.

#### Every home a catechism class

In order to remedy the alarming shortage of priests and catechists, it is essential that every home be turned into a domestic catechism class, where children are taught from their earliest childhood everything which a good Christian needs to know, as well as the practice, at the side of their parents (this must always be done, even if there is an abundance of priests) and together with their parents, the fundamental religious duties of praising, blessing, and giving thanks to God. Such practice is never forgotten and is carried in the heart, just as the first instructor, the <sup>Blessed</sup> Mother herself, is carried in the heart and loved.



However, in view of the fact that there are few homes in which the leaders of the family are sufficiently qualified to fulfill this basic duty, in the name of God we issue a fervent appeal to those persons who are best trained to gather in their own homes or in some other suitable place the children and even older persons in order to give them the proper religious instruction; they should see to it that no one remains without this instruction. We are referring chiefly to the many places in the country and even in the cities where this work is most urgent.

Catechism instruction, the most urgent problem

Certain eloquent evidence corroborates this statement. <sup>Pope</sup> Pius XII has stated that society is in need of urgent and effective remedies, few, however, so urgent as catechism instruction. "Catechism instruction is the first of all the works of Catholic activity. Religious ignorance is the greatest stain on the Catholic nations." <sup>Pope</sup> Leo XIII wrote: "The catechism classroom is the battlefield on which it has to be decided whether society will be Christian or pagan."

Contemplating the disasters brought about by the Paris Commune in the 19th century, Thiers stated: "We must return to catechism instruction," and Victor Hugo made this important confession: "Those parents who send their children to schools where it is openly stated: No catechism instruction here, deserve to be thrown in jail."

Finally, to be brief, Montalbert stated in the French Assembly:

"There is no compromise between socialism and the catechism." Today we would say: Communism.

#### Work highly pleasing to God

The apostles of Christ knew beforehand that the teaching of the catechism is highly pleasing to God our Lord, for "the most divine of human works is to teach others the way to heaven." They also knew that if they were able but failed to do this work, they might one day hear from the lips of that same Jesus Christ these terrible words: "Depart from Me ..... because I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat." We have to give a strict account to God, not merely of the evil which we have done but also of the good which we might have done and failed to do. Think and meditate carefully about these words, beloved parishioners.

#### Coordination of work

We ardently desire that these catechistic centers contact their respective parish priests, from whom they will receive the necessary catechistic material, which we will give them if they need it. They may also directly contact the Director of the Catechistic Work, Father Pedro Maurice, Chancellor of the Archbishopric. Finally, no one should fail to report, at least every three months, on the work he has done.

Best wishes. Let us, without delay, begin this evangelizing campaign, which has the blessing of God and of His Holy Mother, Our Lady, the Virgin of Charity, under whose sponsorship we place the work.

If everyone prepares to do the best he can, and if no one is indolent, only God knows the great deal of good of all kinds which we are going to obtain from His divine hand, which is more than generous, nay, extremely lavish.

Let no one fail to enroll in this campaign for good, even at the cost of some sacrifice, which God will recompense a hundredfold, perhaps even in earthly goods.

In this way we will work completely for God and for Cuba.

#### Urgent appeal

From the priests, from the monks and nuns, we expect resolute, speedy, and constant cooperation. We also expect this from all Catholic organizations, which should mobilize with the greatest enthusiasm.

May the Lord and the Virgin of Charity bless the work and all who collaborate in it.

Enrique, Archbishop of Santiago, Cuba

This pastoral letter is to be read in all churches of this diocese on the first feast day after it is received, or within two